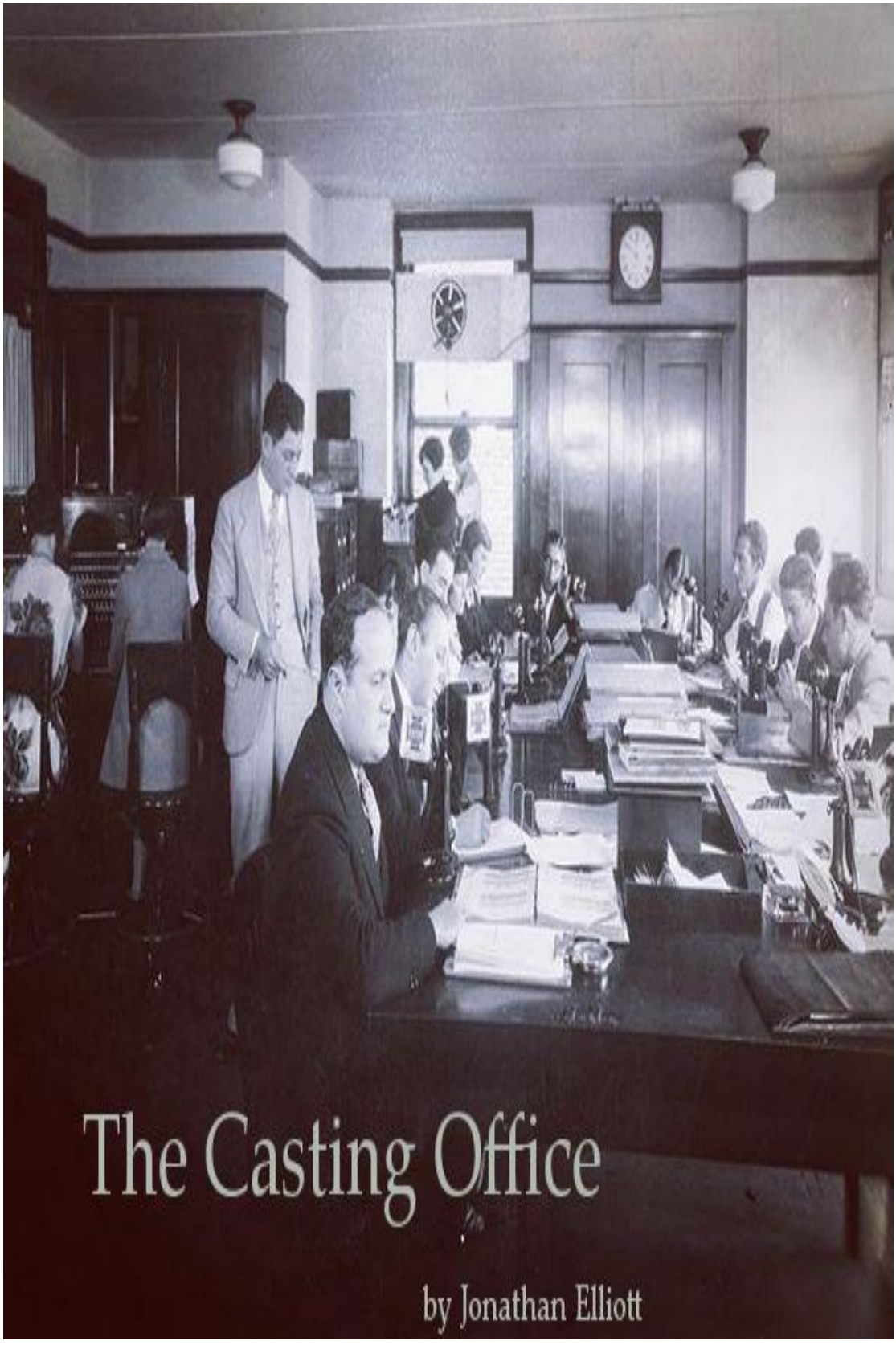

The Casting Office
by Jonathan Elliott

“The Pheasant Cried to Find Her mate” Book of Songs

To the memory of my Dead Office and my Dead friends,
who suffered from the pitiless action of the most
powerful weapon on earth, the camera.

Six Figure Days

There are old stories told in Hollywood about the beginning of the Studio lot system that are utterly mind blowing to me, a young resident of the community that is Beverly Hills, California, we had a large family home with a backyard and pool and my life as a Hollywood Talent Agent was just beginning.

It was such an exciting time in my life I could barely believe it was all finally coming together for me. I mean, you have to understand, I was thirty five years old with my own new small business to employ talent and I had spent maybe fifteen years in law offices and stock-brokerage companies, shuffling papers and files; I had spent what seemed like its own form of eternity in the lobby of temporary employment agencies, waiting to take typing tests, get evaluated, have my resume reviewed, greeted and sent on my way with a smiling face and never hearing back from the majority of them. So doing the basic work of meeting and greeting people, getting their information into the machine and processed was important work to me, work I felt I could do better then anyone else in the world for the time I had spent waiting in that lobby.

In the old days of Hollywood, people came from all over the county looking for work in California. Of course, there is the old dust bowel tale of Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath" that has part in parcel to do with the migrant farm workers, but many of those workers were talked into how handsome they looked at to come to

Los Angeles and look for work in motion pictures. (Used since the 15th century as a legal term, with *part* meaning "a portion" and *parcel* "something integral with a whole," this idiom began to be used more loosely from about 1800. Although both nouns have the same basic meaning, the redundancy lends emphasis)

They call them breakdowns and I guess the new form of joke in town is that this is a prelude to some terrible psychological disaster. Science isn't supposed to react, it is demanded that science analyze situations as they develop and try to provide solutions, and then, science decides to impress the public mind with humor and it fails miserably. How so?

It is the morning of September 11, 2001 and my usual routine in the office is simple. I wake up between ten and eleven in the morning, roll out of bed from my Hollywood apartment, have a brief discussion of the world with Freddy the landlord, smile at his friendly wife Giddy, then, out the gate, lined with honeysuckles, grab a few to suck on for the walk to the train station, make that left from Franklin Place down Highland Blvd, a look at the faces of the slowing cars trying to pile their way onto the 405, maybe a stop for a glazed doughnut and breakfast is covered. Maybe I remembered my work, maybe I didn't at this point and have to go back around the corner to go get it.

About midnight the film and television Breakdowns arrive. They are called Breakdowns because the scene of the action is described in terms of Plot Summary (and the Plot DEVELOPS in Hollywood, do not forget that fact, even if it is only on the subliminal AL-qaeda level in this instance). The Plot summaries are broken down into the cast of characters and the Agent is given a brief description of the demand of the marketplace. Let's say it is a breakdown for a new family television show. The director:producer:casting assistant is looking for a mixed ethnicity family to portray a struggling middle class household trying to move from their apartment into a new house. The cast is broken down by individual characters then *after* plot summary. That is the the truly strange part, the magical part of agenting. Typically in a drama, the audience receives their dose of laughter and tears, drama and tragedy, then goes home to live forever with the memory of what they have seen on the stage. It is very powerful stuff.

The plot summarizes and then the Agent reviews a breakdown of the ethnic component, the age and gender and skill set of each principal character, supporting actors and others.

As I said, the breakdowns for film and television might arrive damn near midnight from the wire service delivery boys who plop them out front with a loud sound that lets you know they just arrived, like they are mad at you are something, that loud thumping CLACK of the sheets hitting the concrete in a roll of paperwork that takes hours in the middle of the night when you are a a simple one man operation; Hard to understand that larger agencies have separated the movies from the television and might have three hundred people reviewing those roles; the work I did completely alone.

The wondrous magic of Hollywood, bear in mind was that, at one point, even as early as the nineteen twenties, when King Vidor ruled the set with a host of others, those casting offices like you see in the picture, those guys and girls walked in and out of those doors and offered tickets, assignments and payment to hundred and hundreds of people every day who showed up with nothing but wholes in their pockets.

Sex in America

In the early part of 2000 I was working on the 27th floor of The Equitable Building on Wilshire Blvd in Los Angeles where I established my own company, Evolve Talent Agency. Times have changed since the original founders of the Studio Lots in Culver City, Hollywood and Los Angeles where the enterprise of business may have been fueled by good looking ingenues and others, but the basic principles of what ran the show were the organizational capacities and abilities of administrators ran the show, sex has become the channel by which the show now runs; for instance, the common Hollywood idiom, or expression, "Sleep your way to the top" may be one way of looking at how Stars advance in the Klieg lights of the set, but another important aspect to understand are both the contrived and real fights over sex and love interests that guide the motion of both the action, in the movies, and the real life situation behind the scenes within the Production aspect of the media, as well as the spill over into the actual administrative duties, men and women find themselves and their career now instantly in jeopardy with the briefest hint of allegation... "he touched me..." Can you imagine? No?

Let me explain, it is even worse and unimaginable then that. I lost my business, my home, my health, my future and my entire life in my own home town of Beverly Hills and the allegation began after the brief thirty minute interview "He stared at me..." From there it became a stare issue, and the poor crying Church decided they, literally, liked our stairs, ***our Stairs***, <u>in our house</u>, in Beverly Hills, California, and in the fuel of sex and fantasy, my house, quite literally, disappeared, all within the motion of scheduling and design of set that folded completely and failed me forthwith at the *slightest* hint of my impropriety.

I remember being on the phone with my Father before he died and I said “Pop, all I need is a schedule for bookings that brings me enough money that I can support the house....” There were a few things I knew. First, that he was old and would soon die. Second, there would no longer be enough money to maintain our large house on Trenton Drive, and third, that it was up to me.

My father sensed the madness all around us, the misperceived violations, etc;, even down to those when he said on my first day as an Agent when I checked in on him as he was composing in his small studio beyond the pool in the back of his house, he said to me “ Now they’ll be coming through the back stage door looking for tickets to the show that is already sold out and forget the fact that they have the whole front row reserved for themselves;” I said “What do you mean Pop?” He said “They always feel they got to sell tickets”

Funny how that translates into the sexual aggravation from the Church that destroyed me. I was in a Starbucks on Robertson and co Blvd in the middle of the afternoon. Bear in mind this is 2016, and I am thirteen years out of business at that point. A beautiful young model from Belgium walks in and sits down at the table for coffee, normally I try to stay away from them but she reminded me of an old friend so I sat down next to her and asked her where she was from and how she was doing in Hollywood. After about six minutes I ran out to feed another quarter into the parking meter and there was already an officer writing a ticket *to advance the theory of my violation* with the model. Just as my Father had said, to s**ell the ticket.**

The main commodity of the media and advertising is sex. That much is true, and one girl more beautiful then the other came through the doors of the Evolve office on a daily basis (sometimes four or five times a day) each one of them young, eager and ambitious to establish a career as a Hollywood Starlet and make it to the big screen.

As you can imagine, the competition is fierce, from the perspective of the model and actress in the casting rooms, sometimes waiting around for three hundred people to be seen, and from the perspective of the agent, who faces charges of the most ludicrous sort, from incompetence to perversion for the specific purpose of taking the talent to another venue and releasing them of their obligation to make money at the agency.

I look back at the industry now and wonder if the allure of sex and drugs, easy money and fun, the glamour of the sensual and the erotic, poised together as an industry that now charges by the minute on the internet for you to see them, I wonder if it is not crumbling the vast institution that is media; that the scientific advancement of the internet may have made the communication easier and the cash register more accessible, but it maybe actually disintegrating production and its resources from the perspective of network. They call it *sexual starvation*.

The minute charge on internet is something to review in terms of real issues of human trafficking and enslavement. I had a chance, or at least, took one, over the last few days to finally take the time to peer into these rooms and see for myself. Bare in mind, some of these women work out of cubicles designed like bedrooms all over Eastern Europe and elsewhere , in where houses and facilities where maybe hundreds of girls are on the spot, all in private, at the very same time. You see the setup is the same. A very sleek and elegantly designed place, wonderfully modern looking, a pair of high heels on the bureau, sometimes a coffee maker. That is the sum total of their lives. I ask them if they live there, they deny it. I ask them if they go for dinner, they say they take breaks.

I think about my father's own career in show business. The laughter in the house, the table set for dinner, the living room, the dining room, the library, the kitchen, the bedrooms and bathrooms and pool in the backyard. The piano and couches and chairs.

The whole family neatly arranged at dinner time and with each other at that same moment in time, together, everyday, as a family. I wonder if these girls will ever realize a life for themselves in what they call a living, or making one. I think to myself, hmmm, I have DISH Network cable and the Classic Arts channel is on channel 9000 something and ABC maintains Channel 7, NBC channel 4, CBS Channel 2, the main *Major* networks lined up against Evolve, so that leaves only 8000+ channels available to us for advertising, shows and building lives through network communications that have been completely lost to the public in the search for the quick fix on the internet, a fix that offers them a rapid and bizarre enslavement to the camera on nearly a twenty four hour basis. Yet it still is not possible in the stranglehold of Church morality.

Then, and unfortunately, it gets even worse. I mean, put down Eastern Europe, that's easy, now look at them in America. These girls online, you see them in the States and their clothes are spilled on the floor in an unwashed pile, the bureaus empty of anything, and, in fact, the shelves buckling and uneven, broken and rooms without furniture, without hope, without life – as the deprivation of life brings us to the brink of our own mass sexual starvation. Can you imagine that for an instant – mass sexual starvation? Before I got online I took the opportunity to look up the rate of marriage in America. Coincidentally, it has dropped from 8.2 (per thousand) in 2000 to 6.8 in 2012. Did you know that a hundred years ago the number was above 90?

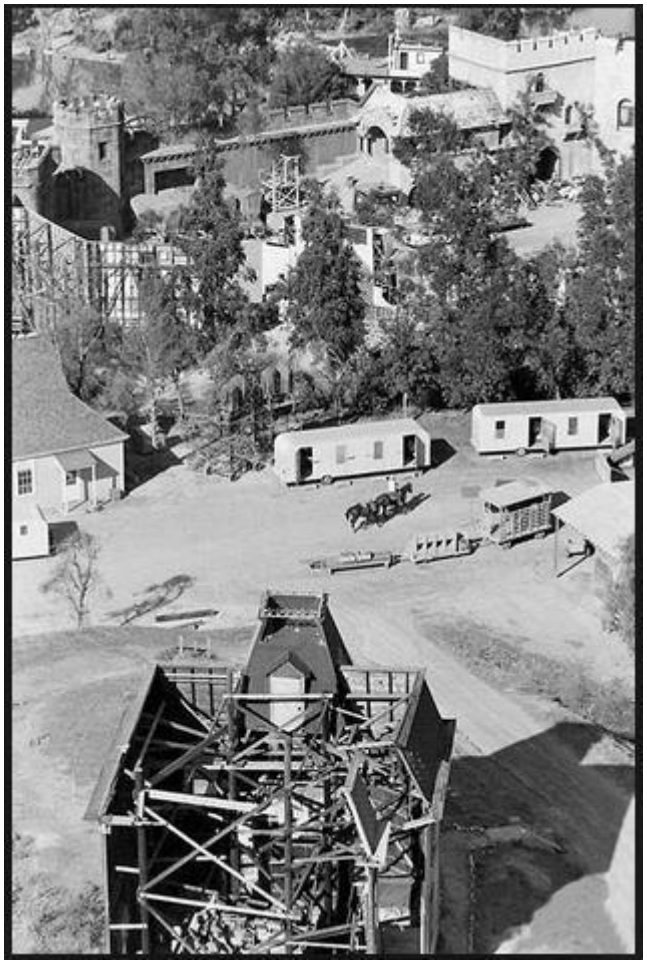
Our founding father, Thomas Jefferson, writes in a letter to Charles Bellini. Paris, September 30, 1785:

"While the great mass of the people are thus suffering under physical and moral oppression, I have endeavored to examine more nearly the condition of the great, to appreciate the true value of the circumstances in their situation, which dazzle the bulk of spectators, and, especially, to

compare it with that degree of happiness which is enjoyed in America, by every class of people. Intrigues of love occupy the younger, and those of ambition, the elder part of the great. Conjugal love having no existence among them, domestic happiness, of which that is the basis, is utterly unknown. In lieu of this, are substituted pursuits which nourish and invigorate all our bad passions, and which offer only moments of ecstasy, amidst days and months of restlessness and torment. Much, very much inferior, this, to the tranquil, permanent felicity with which domestic society in America, blesses most of its inhabitants; leaving them to follow steadily those pursuits which health and reason approve, and rendering truly delicious the intervals of those pursuits. ”

Perhaps the global village has brought us closer together, at the same time shifting us away from the traditional values that our country established for itself. Can you imagine it for a brief moment? The sexually driven society is driving itself into the ground. I want to examine sex as a sociological movement in the next chapter. For now, goodbye, right?

The Original Plan To Build The Studio System.



Vehicles arrived, with Mexican horses upon the already developed areas.

then a Large business center that was the first set construction of the veneer of a city *en stage form*

They built a Church first thing, not a Fifteenth Century Renaissance style Cathedral or Church, but wood planks and dry wall, the quick fix,

The final product, the American Dream, a Hollywood Celebrities living quarter during shooting, The Holly Wood Bungalow